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**TRAINING NEEDS
OF A WORLDWIDE MILITARY EXCHANGE SALESFORCE**

A Research Paper Presented to the Graduate Faculty
of the Department of STEM Educational and Professional Studies
at Old Dominion University

In Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for
the Master of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies

By
Chelsea Camarda
August 2015

SIGNATURE PAGE

Chelsea Camarda prepared this research study under the direction of Dr. John M. Ritz in SEPS 636, Problems in Occupational and Technical Studies, at Old Dominion University. It was submitted to the faculty as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Occupational and Technical Studies.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
SIGNATURE PAGE	ii
LIST OF TABLES	v
LIST OF FIGURES	vi
 CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Statement of the Problem.....	2
Research Objectives.....	2
Background and Significance.....	2
Limitations.....	4
Assumptions.....	5
Procedures.....	5
Definition of Terms.....	6
Overview of Chapters.....	8
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	9
Salesforce Training Needs.....	9
Positive Effects on Training a Salesforce.....	13
Beneficial Training Methods and Topics.....	15
Summary.....	19
III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES	20
Population.....	20
Instrument Design.....	20
Methods of Data Collection.....	21
Statistical Analysis.....	22
Summary.....	21
IV. FINDINGS	23
Survey Response.....	23
Survey Results.....	23
Summary.....	35
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	36
Summary.....	36
Conclusions.....	37
Recommendations.....	40
 REFERENCES	43

APPENDICES	45
Appendix A: Survey	45
Appendix B: Notification Letter.....	53

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Sales Manager Perceptions of Sales Management Training.....	13
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LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The Impact that Successful Sales Training Has on the Customer, the Salesforce, and the Company.....	18
Figure 2. Training Methods.....	20
Figure 3. Sales Force Competences.....	22
Figure 4. Results of Question 1: What is your highest level of education you have Completed?.....	24
Figure 5. Results of Question 2: How long have you worked in a field sales role in the Military Exchange Market?.....	24
Figure 6. Results of Question 3: Overall, how do you rate the current training provided by S & K Sales Co.?.....	25
Figure 7. Results of Question 4: Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of the training provided by S & K Sales Co.?.....	26
Figure 8. Results of Question 7: What areas listed below would you like to see additional training programs?.....	28
Figure 9. Results of Question 8: How important are the following training topics to you?.....	29
Figure 10. Results of Question 11: How would you describe your technical ability?.....	30
Figure 11. Results of Question 12: What technology would you like to be trained on?...31	
Figure 12. Results of Question 13: Please select the most desirable day for you to attend virtual training programs.....	32
Figure 13. Results of Question 14: Please select the most convenient time for you to attend virtual training programs.....	33
Figure 14. Results of Question 15: Please rate the below training methods in terms of how effective each is to you.....	33

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

S & K Sales Co. is a leading military resale organization servicing all military exchanges including AAFES, NEXCOM, MCX, and CGX. Their goal is to provide the best sales force training available in the military exchange market. The company is in the process of determining what specific training is needed, so it can focus their sales team training efforts in a more effective way. Like many other competitors in the military resale industry, S & K Sales does not offer any formal training programs to educate their Area Managers (AMs) and Territory Managers (TMs). Instead, the AMs and TMs are provided product information via email from the Business Managers based out of S & K's home offices in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and in Southlake, Texas.

In order to keep up with the ever-changing competitive environment, it is important for S & K Sales to separate themselves from the competition by offering the best possible training in the industry. By providing structured training programs to the sales team, it could benefit the entire sales force thereby positively affecting the overall company performance. The sales force includes a diverse group of AMs and TMs with different levels of abilities and qualifications; therefore, research was necessary to determine the specific training needed that would provide the most benefit for the overall sales team. The researcher was able to accomplish this goal by comparing applicable training needs to the training needs of the sales team. Subsequently, the researcher satisfied the need by recommending a list of training courses that would benefit the AMs and TMs at S & K Sales Co.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The problem of this study was to determine the training needs of a worldwide military exchange salesforce to enhance their ability to train store personnel on product knowledge and customer service at military exchange stores.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The following objectives were established to answer this problem:

- RQ₁: Identify the types of product knowledge and customer service training required to be a successful territory manager in the military exchange market.
- RQ₂: Identify the types of product knowledge and customer service training that the military exchange salesforce should receive from their military broker.
- RQ₃: Determine the specific topics of training that should be offered to territory managers to better prepare them to excel in the military sales market.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Established in 1934, S & K Sales Co. is the most experienced and successful firm providing brand name consumer products to the worldwide military exchange resale market including the Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES), Navy Exchange Service Command (NEXCOM), Marine Corps Exchange (MCX), and Coast Guard Exchange (CGX). The mission of the military exchanges is to provide quality goods and services at a savings and to support the military quality of life (Vizzier, 2011). Customers that are approved to shop at the exchange stores include active-duty military, military retirees, reserve personnel, National Guard personnel, U.S. civilian Department of Defense

employees when stationed outside of the U.S., Department of State officials serving in foreign countries, and the dependents of all listed.

There are 40 S & K Sales Co. Territory and Area Managers strategically located around the world allowing S & K Sales Co. to service and respond to whatever the military resale market presents. S & K Sales Co. has always strived to provide quality service in the military resale market, but they are now eager to provide excellence. In order for S & K Sales Co. to excel, their Territory and Area Managers need to develop and enhance their skills through company provided training programs. Providing structured training programs to their field team is not something that S & K Sales provided in the past and they have now come to realize its importance. With the increased competition from other military exchange resale companies, which were providing similar levels of in store military exchange support, S & K Sales Co. needed to focus their efforts on identifying how they could train and develop their field team to ensure they remained on top.

S & K Sales Co.'s retail support functions can be compared to the civilian resale market field support; therefore, recommendations can be made from other field training programs in retail focused environments. There are various reports currently available where authors have identified sales force training needs in the civilian market. For example, Sinha, Zoltners, and Zoltners (2001) identify ways in which successful training had a favorable impact on the customer, the sales force, and the company. They also go on to review ideas that are proven to enhance a sales force training program. Although the information available on sales force training is beneficial, there is not

information available on the training needs specific to the military exchange resale market. This is the reason to undertake this study.

LIMITATIONS

It is noted that the following considerations impose limitations which may have bearing on this study:

- The research was limited to one Military Sales Organization within the Military Exchange Market, S & K Sales Co.
- The Area and Territory managers are located all over the world.
- The factors that contribute to training needs may not be absolute; this is based on findings from surveys sent to the selected Military Sales Organization's Territory and Area Managers.
- The consistency of findings may have been affected by the participating Area and Territory Managers. Uprightness of answers, moods, personal experiences, and past experiences surveyed could all act as limitations.
- Measuring the Area and Territory Manager's level of satisfaction and attitudes will be limited to the member's personal meaning and experiences within the organization. These will reflect the personal views and opinions of the individual.
- The Area and Territory Managers range in age and possess different levels of technical aptitude.

ASSUMPTIONS

This study was based on the following assumptions:

- The Area and Territory Managers at S & K Sales Co. had training needs.
- The researcher has knowledge of the past training initiatives at S & K Sales Co.
- Improved training of Area and Territory Managers will increase the overall company performance at S & K Sales Co.

PROCEDURES

The researcher originally reviewed relevant literature and gathered information from research focused on sales force training needs in the civilian marketplace. By reviewing the past training initiatives at S & K Sales Co., the researcher was able to determine deficiencies in applicable training. A survey was then conducted to find out the types of product knowledge and customer service training that the S & K Sales Co. Area and Territory Managers would like to receive from S & K Sales Co. to help them further develop the skills needed to be successful in their roles. This survey will also detect the factors that the AM and TM's feel contribute to a positive overall training experience. The data will further reveal if structured training programs might benefit S & K's AMs and TMs.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

The following terms were defined to assist the reader with this study:

- **AAFES:** This refers to the Army and Air Force Exchange Service which is an agency of the United States Department of Defense. AAFES's goal is to support the men and women of the armed forces during military operations by providing everything a soldier may need or want, tax free and at a reduced price compared to civilian retailers.
- **AM:** This refers to Area Managers. Area Managers are assigned a specific area or region where they are responsible for managing a group of Territory managers within their region. Area Managers also have responsibility of servicing a select few military exchange stores that are not covered by their Territory Managers.
- **CGX:** This refers to the Coast Guard Exchange which is an agency of the United States Department of Defense. CGX's goal is to support the men and women of the armed forces during military operations by providing everything a soldier may need or want, tax free and at a reduced price compared to civilian retailers.
- **MCX:** This refers to the Marine Corps Exchange which is an agency of the United States Department of Defense. MCX's goal is to support the men and women of the armed forces during military operations by providing

everything a soldier may need or want, tax free, and at a reduced price compared to civilian retailers.

- **Military branches:** This term refers to all of the Military Exchange Branches including AAFES, NEXCOM, MCX, and CGX.
- **Military Exchange:** This is a type of retail store that resembles contemporary department stores or strip malls that can be found on United States military installations worldwide. Customers that are approved to shop at the exchange stores include active-duty military, military retirees, reserve personnel, National Guard personnel, U.S. civilian Department of Defense employees when stationed outside of the U.S., Department of State officials serving in foreign countries, and the dependents of all listed.
- **NEXCOM:** This refers to the Navy Exchange Service Command which is an agency of the United States Department of Defense. NEXCOM's goal is to support the men and women of the armed forces during military operations by providing everything a soldier may need or want, tax free, and at a reduced price compared to civilian retailers.
- **Sales force:** Area Managers and Territory Managers.
- **TM:** This refers to Territory Managers. Territory managers are assigned a specific territory within an area or region where they are responsible for servicing military exchange stores. Territory Managers report to the geographically appropriate Area Managers.

- **Training needs:** Areas of needed improvement in job knowledge and skills that require additional training.

OVERVIEW OF CHAPTERS

In Chapter I information was presented that dealt with the problem of identifying training needs of a worldwide military exchange salesforce to enhance their ability to train store personnel on product knowledge and customer service at military exchange stores. The problem limitations were specified and the assumptions were stated. Important acronyms and terms were defined and the research procedures were explained.

Chapter II, Review of Literature, will discuss literature relevant to the study. The literature that is reviewed will identify salesforce training needs, the positive effects on training a salesforce, and beneficial training methods and topics. The final chapters will present the methods, procedures, findings, and provide a summary, conclusions, and recommendations that will help S & K Sales Co. understand what salesforce training is needed within their organization.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The problem of this study was to determine the training needs of a worldwide military exchange salesforce to enhance their ability to train store personnel on product knowledge and customer service at military exchange stores. This chapter contains information on salesforce training needs, the positive effects on training a salesforce, beneficial training methods and topics, and a summary.

SALESFORCE TRAINING NEEDS

With the ever changing demands of the military exchange market, it is important to identify how salesforce training needs have evolved. Another hurdle is an age diverse salesforce; industry sees more and more mixed age salesforces that have different levels of technical aptitude. In order to meet different manufacturer expectations in the field, Area and Territory Managers in the Military Exchange Market must be equipped with updated knowledge and skills through continuous training efforts. Their roles are multifaceted involving multi-tasking activities like managing beauty advisors and merchandisers at store level, training and developing store personnel on product knowledge and customer service techniques, monitoring their territory's sales by store by brand, coordinating demos and in-store events, re-setting planograms, identifying store inventory, replenishment and out-of-stock issues, etc.

It is imperative that each AM and TM be prepared to meet the current and future obstacles of the Military Resale Market. Reid and Barrington (1999) recognized

that training is an important facilitator of organizational change. Many organizations are identifying areas of opportunity to better train and develop their employees. By identifying the training needs within an organization, managers will be able to prioritize their importance and determine a solution – need identification becomes critical. Erasmus et al. (2000) defines need identification as an investigation, undertaken to determine the nature of performance problems for selected roles in order to establish underlying causes and how training can address them.

Scholars have identified various sales training needs. For example, Christian (1962) indicates that most firms base 98% of their training on product knowledge. He suggests that there are two main sales training areas that are neglected: (a) market and customer information and characteristics, and (b) selling techniques and how-to sales basics. He describes a complete sales training as a three-legged stool: one leg for product knowledge, one leg for market and customer education, and the third leg for selling methods. Saremi and Nezhad (2014) identify three main needs for job training as follows:

1. **Technological advances:** Mechanized and automation of an organization is essential for survival. In addition, employees training for basic skills are needed and important.
2. **Complexity of the organization:** With the increase in technology development, many organizations turned to a complex organization. This complexity makes training a necessity at all levels, from top managers to workers.

3. **Human resource relations:** Growth and organizational complexity leads to arising of human problems such as alienation, interpersonal and inter-group problems, etc. Thus, training is needed for addressing human problems in organizations.

Desimone et al. (2002) identifies four levels of training needs to be examined – the needs of the organization, individual employees' skills, knowledge and attitudes, and their functional responsibilities, as well as the needs of the department. McArdle (1996) suggested two types of needs assessments. First, identify the work problem and offer training based solutions. Second, consider the available opportunities by identifying and acquiring new knowledge, skills, and attitudes. In order to discover training needs for different groups of trainees, managers must understand current and future work situations, clarify the business objectives, integrate the business objectives with training strategy, and ensure organizational support. Sarin et al. (2010) uncovered a training needs assessment model where it was revealed that age is a significant variable leading to a difference in preferred training needs which can impact the overall training effectiveness. They found both positive and negative relationships between training and older trainees. First they found that trainee age has an important relationship with trainee timeliness and they suggested that the older the trainee, the stronger the relationship between timeliness and training effectiveness. On the negative side, they suggested that increased age has a difficult time with formal training settings which suggest that older trainees have a weaker relationship with training effectiveness. Similar findings were also addressed by Deal (2007) in his study on how sales

professionals of all ages find common ground within training. He determined that younger trainees prefer to learn both hard and soft skills on the job, while the older trainees prefer to learn hard skills through structured classroom training and soft skills on the job. He also revealed that older trainees prefer team based and computer based training, whereas the younger trainees did not feel as strongly that these are needed. Fu (2009) discovered that as age increases, trainees become more resistant to change and to new technology. This can pose a threat as more and more technologies are being implemented by organizations to keep up with their completion. In addition, as Rao and Shah (2012) explain, due to older trainees' increased fear of change and of technology, they may experience greater anxiety or distress in the context of technological change. For them, timeliness of change-related training may be more critical than for the younger trainees.

A study conducted by Powers et al. (2010) investigated the current practices of sales management training programs in terms of delivery and content. Their results found that training occurs in early stages of management careers, remote training technologies are frequently used, and significant gender differences in training perceptions exist. They identified that not only is an increasing amount of women entering the workforce in sales management roles, but men and women attach different importance weights on training topics. Specifically, women placed a greater importance on training topics related to communication, teamwork, and sensitivity to cultural issues. Their study also indicated that in addition to the use of technology to support and conduct training, companies rely on group communication, role-playing, and case

studies when training sales managers. In terms of topics that should be covered in sales management training, three major areas were identified – selling processes, leadership, and evaluation and control. They suggest that there is a limited emphasis and a need to provide training in broader organizational responsibilities. Table 1 reports the respondent's perceptions of the importance, effectiveness, and satisfaction of their current sales training programs by testing whether the mean is significantly greater than the scale midpoint. As shown, when asked whether their skills were sufficient to succeed without further training in sales management, respondents reported that additional sales management training would be needed.

Table 1

Sales Manager Perceptions of Sales Management Training

Perceptions	Mean (SD)
Overall level of satisfaction with sales management training received?	5.27* (1.30)
Overall importance of the sales manager training your company provides?	5.89* (1.20)
Were your skills as a salesperson sufficient to succeed as a sales manager without further training in sales management?	3.83 (1.40)
Overall level of effectiveness of the sales management training received?	5.61* (1.50)

*Mean is significantly different ($p < 0.05$) from the scale midpoint (4.0)

Source: Powers et al. (2010)

POSITIVE EFFECTS ON TRAINING A SALESFORCE

The main goal of sales training is to make a salesforce successful. A good organization offers their field team the opportunity to develop the abilities and skills

they need to succeed. Zoltners et al. (2001) identifies ways in which successful training has a positive impact on the customer, the sales force, and the company. See Figure 1.

Customer Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customers' product and service needs are understood and met.• Customers feel that their salesperson adds value and can be trusted.• Customers feel that their salesperson is not wasting their time.• Customers like to work with the company's salespeople.• Changing customer needs are incorporated into an adaptive selling process.
Sales Force Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none">• New salespeople become productive quickly.• Salespeople enter every selling situation confident that they are equipped to succeed.• Salespeople are aware of technological, environmental, market, customer, industry, and product needs.
Company Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Salesperson retention and sales force morale are high.• Products and services are differentiated; price competition is minimized.• The company culture is understood, supported, and embraced by the sales force.

Figure 1. The impact that successful sales training has on the customer, the sales force, and the company.

Saremi and Nezhad (2014) address the importance of empowering employees through in-service training. They state that training is used with the objective of improving the quality of skills, knowledge, and attitude that lead to the empowerment of employees in doing their tasks and success within an organization. They further disclose that in-service training is effective in increasing job satisfaction of employees and impacts the effectiveness and efficiency of human resource.

BENEFICIAL TRAINING METHODS AND TOPICS

Finding the right training method that works best in field product and sales based training is crucial. Aptitude gaps can occur when the sales force does not have the knowledge, skills, or ability to implement the best service for the organization.

Companies have tried e-learning, d-learning, face-to-face, and blended methods and have found similar results as to which methods are proven to be most effective.

Zoltners et al. (2001) identify five main training method categories, including classroom, participant and observation training, self-study, external seminars, and on-the-job training. See Figure 2. They conclude that the most effective method of training sales personnel is on-the-job training. It produces the highest retention rate for skills and knowledge applicable to the job, and its impact on individual performance can be observed during training. The downside of this form of training is the expense and additional supervision involved. Self-study, while it is the least expensive, requires personal motivation which not all trainees naturally have. And, classroom training falls between these two methods.

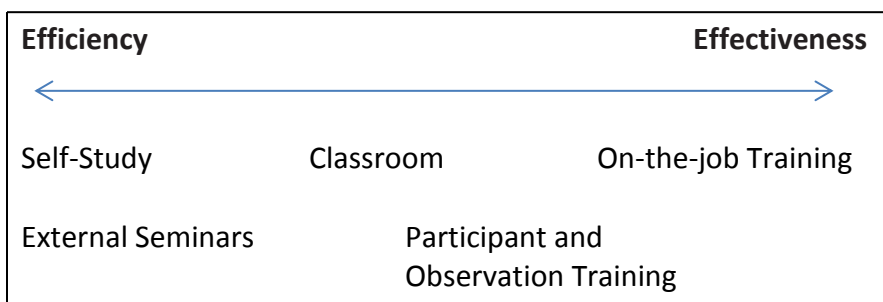


Figure 2. Training methods.

An improved learning initiative is needed to unite product and sales training. As suggested by Wickman (2008), the most successful product-based training aligns objectives with methodology and has the following components: good instructor led training, assessment, reinforcement through e-learning and d-learning, and management support. Paper and online delivery, while effective, are not as interactive as face-to-face training. Not to mention, the field does not always have access to laptops and internet connection in-stores. It is imperative that Sales Reps have the ability to interact with each other, simulate different sales situations, and receive feedback from their manager. One way that an organization can overcome this is to offer an annual meeting where the AMs and TMs can come together and connect ideas. Prior to the sales meeting, the field could complete an e-learning module on the product basics so they have their foundation before they show up to the face-to-face meeting. Following the sales meeting, the Area Managers can meet with their Territory Managers quarterly to work on additional skills needed to fulfill and excel in their roles. Wickman (2008) identifies a four level system for categorizing training which incorporates various training methods:

1. **Awareness:** Sale Reps need to know what aspects of a product have changed.
2. **Knowledge:** Sales Reps should be able to speak about the basic features of a product. Email communication should be sent out followed by web interaction or distance learning.

3. **Understanding:** Sales Reps should be able to talk about the product and relate it to the needs that they are hearing from the client. This is when a trainer needs to be in front of a class for at least one to two hours.
4. **Skill:** In order for employees to attain a skill, there has to be coaching and mentoring in an actual sales situation, as the classroom is still an artificial, simulated environment. This requires the field manager to go out, watch the person do it in front of real people, give them immediate feedback, and see that the things that were built in the classroom are actually being used in the real world.

In addition to the various training methods available, identifying the key training topics that would benefit a field sales team is equally important. Conducting sales training can be complicated, not only do the AMs and TMs need to understand the nature of the product, but they need to understand how the product fits into the market. Unfortunately, most companies are only training their field on the product itself, and they are not taking into account the importance of training their teams on the skills needed to sell and support that product. It is also important for the field to understand where the customer is in the purchasing process, how that aligns to the organization's sales approach, and what the best product match is for that customer.

Schultz (2013) suggests that salespeople need to know more than product and service specifics. He distinguishes that knowledge employed by the most successful salespeople include these essentials:

- Industry dynamics, trends, and players.

- Company positioning and overall value propositions.
- Categories of common customer needs by customer persona.
- Impact of solving various needs, including rational and emotional impact.
- Products and services, including how they solve needs.
- Competition and how they compare.
- Sales processes, strategy, teams, and handoffs.
- Post-sale fulfillment processes.
- Account development and expansion.

Zoltners et al. (2001) identify three main category competencies that salespeople need to possess in order to be successful. See Figure 3. This can be translated to vital training topics that should be addressed when training a field sales team.

Knowledge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Product • Customer • Technology – database, information management, and tools • Company policy, values, culture
Ability/Capability <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer and industry research • Customer and account profitability maximization • Development of best-selling process • Quantitative analysis • Problem solving
Skills <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prospecting • Needs identification • Time and territory management • Listening • Persuasion • Negotiation • Closing • Account maintenance and expansion

Figure 3. Sales force competencies.

Source: Zoltners et al. (2001)

SUMMARY

This chapter examined information on salesforce training needs, the positive effects on training a salesforce, and beneficial training methods and topics. By investigating these topics, it will help S & K Sales Co. determine the training needs of a worldwide military exchange salesforce to enhance their ability to train store personnel on product knowledge and customer service at military exchange stores.

Chapter III will outline the methods and procedures used in this study. The instruments which were used for data collection will be discussed. Methods used to collect and analyze the data will also be explained.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter explained the methods and procedures that were needed to conduct the study. Information was provided on the population, instrument design, the administration of the survey, and the treatment of the data collected.

POPULATION

S & K Sales Co., established in 1934, is the most experienced and successful firm providing brand name consumer products to the worldwide military exchange resale market (S & K Sales Co., 2015). The population of this study consisted of 40 S & K Sales Co. Territory and Area Managers strategically located around the world. The population of this study consisted of men and women which varied in ages from 30 to 65. Their educational levels and fields of study were also diverse.

INSTRUMENT DESIGN

An electronic survey was constructed containing open and closed form questions. The purpose of the survey was to determine the training needs of a worldwide military exchange salesforce to enhance their ability to train store personnel on product knowledge and customer service at military exchange stores. The survey also identified the salesforce training needs, positive effects that training has had on the salesforce, and beneficial training methods and topics. The questions correspond to the research objectives and findings of other studies. A copy of this instrument can be found in Appendix A.

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The survey was sent to the Area and Territory Managers via Survey Planet, an electronic delivery system. Since human subjects were involved in this study, a notification letter was sent via email to each Area and Territory Manager in the population. The letter informed participants about the study, the required personal data, and how privacy would be maintained. A copy of this notification is included in Appendix B. A follow-up reminder was prepared and sent two weeks later via email to those Area and Territory Managers that had not yet responded. The email included a direct link to the survey.

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The survey questions were designed to determine recommendations of professional development that could fulfill the training needs of the Area and Territory managers. Upon receiving the completed surveys, the data were analyzed, responses reviewed, tabulated, and assembled into table form. The percentage, mean, median, and standard deviation were computed for each question. The response number and percentages for each question were also tabulated.

SUMMARY

Chapter III presented the methods and procedures used in this descriptive study. Sections included an overview of the population, instrument design, data collection methods, and how statistics would be used in this case study. The research

was directed towards the training needs of the Area and Territory Managers at S & K Sales Co.

Data were collected through survey questions to assure that all research goals were obtained. Each data set was then analyzed by determining the number, percentage of similar answers, and descriptive statistics. Chapter IV will discuss the findings of the data collected.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to determine the training needs of a worldwide military exchange salesforce to enhance their ability to train store personnel on product knowledge and customer service at military exchange stores. This was accomplished by surveying 40 Area and Territory Managers from S & K Sales Co. strategically located all around the world. Data received from these surveys were presented in this chapter, followed by a summary.

SURVEY RESPONSE

Surveys were distributed to 40 Area and Territory Managers via Survey Planet, an electronic delivery system. Seventy percent of the Area and Territory Managers responded to the survey request as of June 1st, 2015. A follow-up email was sent to the 12 remaining (30%) non-respondents to encourage their participation. The remaining 12 surveys were completed by June 20th, 2015. This was a 100% response rate.

SURVEY RESULTS

The survey was composed of 19 questions including multiple choice and short answer. These are reported as follows. The legend for each question follows clockwise from the top.

Question 1: *What is your highest level of education you have completed?*

Results for this question show that 17 participants (42%) earned a bachelor's degree, 10 participants (25%) responded earned an associate's degree, 8 participants

(20%) earned an education to a high school degree, 3 participants had a GED, 1 participant earned a master's degree, and 1 participant earned a PhD degree. The most common degree held was a bachelor's degree. See Figure 4.

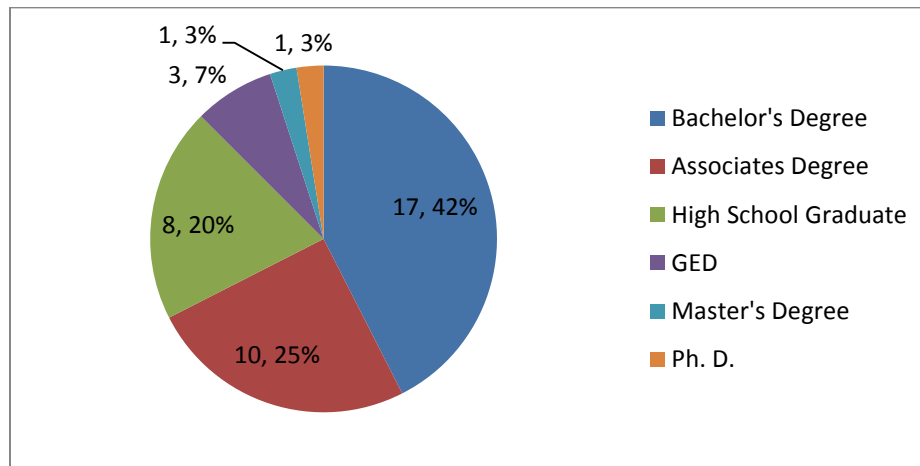


Figure 4. Results of Question 1: What is your highest level of education you have completed?

Question 2: *How long have you worked in a field sales role in the Military Exchange Market?*

Results for this question show 10 participants (25%) responded that they have worked in a field sales role in the Military Exchange Market for more than 25 years, 9 participants (22%) have worked in this role for 16-20 years, 7 participants (17%) have worked in this role for 21-25 years, 4 participants have worked in this role for 3-4 years, 4 participants have worked in this role for 5-10 years, 3 participants have worked in this role for 1-2 years, 2 participants have worked in this role for 11-15 years, and 1 participant worked in this role for less than 1 year. See Figure 5.

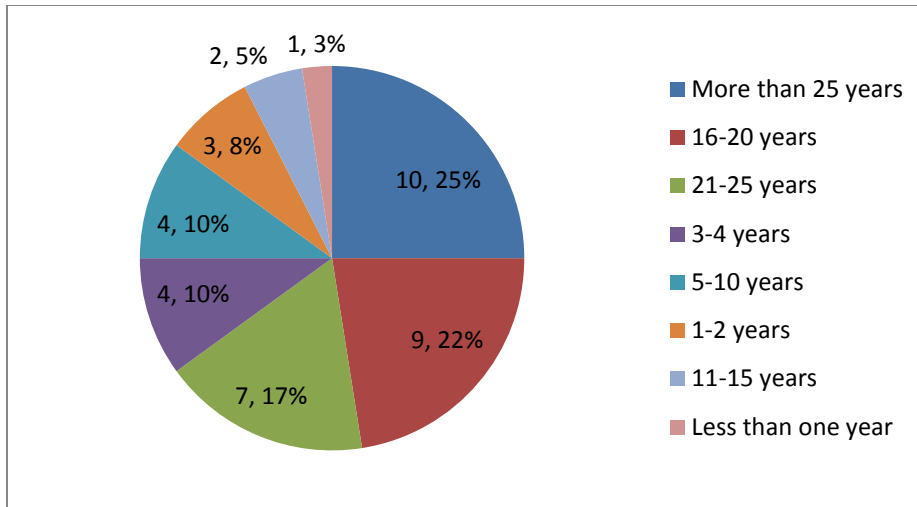


Figure 5. Results of Question 2: How long have you worked in a field sales role in the Military Exchange Market?

Question 3: Overall, how do you rate the current training provided by S & K Sales Co.?

Results for this question show 15 participants (38%) felt that the current training provided by S & K Sales Co. was either average or above average, 13 participants (33%) felt that the current training was average, 5 participants felt the current training was below average, 4 participants felt that the current training was exceptional, and 3 participants felt that the current training was poor. See Figure 6.

Question 4: Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of the training provided by S & K Sales Co.?

Results for this question show 16 participants (40%) responded that the effectiveness of the training provided by S & K Sales Co. was somewhat effective, 15 participants (37%) responded that the training was effective, 7 participants (18%) responded that the training was very effective, 2 participants (5%) responded that the

training was not very effective. See Figure 7. (The mean was 3.3, median was 3, and the standard deviation = 1.05).

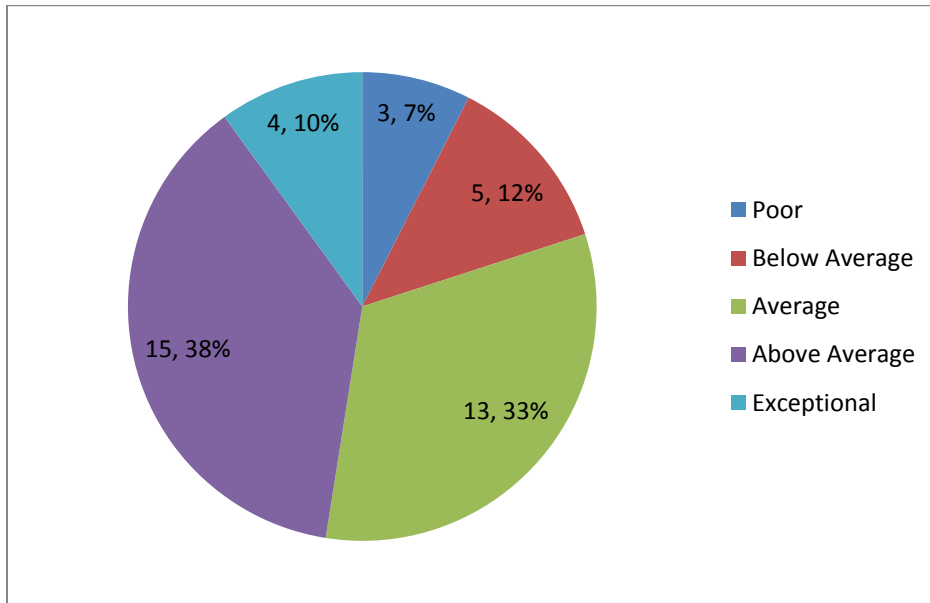


Figure 6. Results of Question 3: Overall, how do you rate the current training provided by S & K Sales Co.?

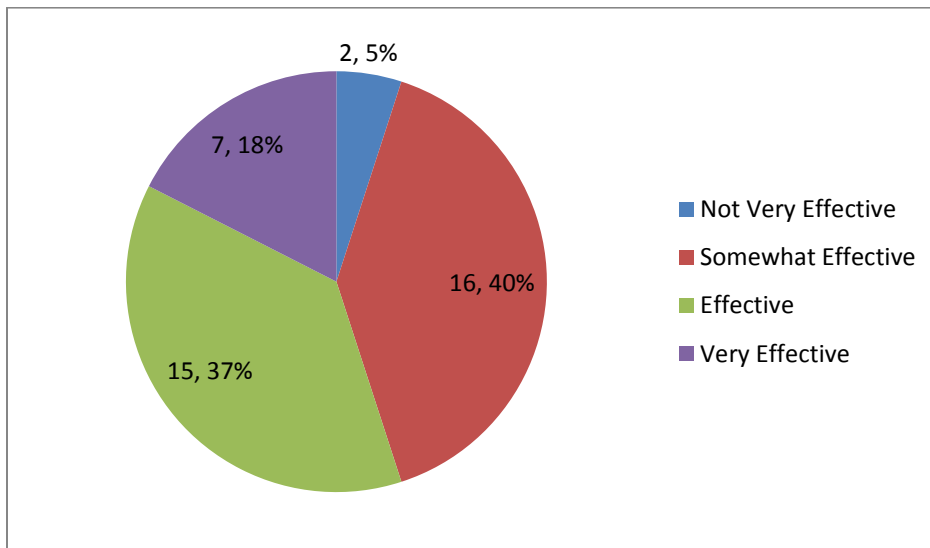


Figure 7. Results of Question 4: Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of the training provided by S & K Sales Co.?

Question 5: How important is customer service training to you?

Results for this question show 31 participants (77.5%) responded that customer service training was very important to them. Eight participants (20%) responded that customer service training was somewhat important to them, and 1 participant responded that customer service training was not important to them. See Figure 8. (The mean was 2.68, the median was 3, and the standard deviation was 0.82). A mean of 2.68 indicates that the AMs and TMs felt that customer service training was somewhat important to very important.

Question 6: How important is product knowledge training to you?

Results for this question show 37 participants (92.5%) responded that product knowledge training was very important to them and 3 participants responded that product knowledge training was somewhat important to them. See Figure 9. (The mean was 1.25, the median was 1, and the standard deviation was 0.49)

Question 7: What areas listed below would you like to see additional training programs?

Results of this question show that the participants responded that the top three areas they would like to see additional training programs are in technology (16%), analyzing their business (14%) and strategic planning and organizational skills (11%). See Figure 8.

Question 8: How important are the following training topics to you? (1 = Not Important, 2 = Not Now, 3 = Not Sure, 4 = Somewhat Important, 5 = Very Important)

Results for this question show the participants responded that analyzing your business was the most important training topic to them with a mean of 4.53, followed

by technology with a mean of 4.5, and strategic planning and organizational skills with a mean of 4.48. Additional areas that were noted as important training topics were visual merchandising ($M = 4.35$), employee performance management ($M = 4.3$), selling techniques ($M = 4.3$), in-store demos and event ($M = 4.3$), cross-selling ($M = 4.28$), customer relationship management ($M = 4.15$), presentation skills ($M = 4.15$), confidence on the sales floor ($M = 4.13$), finding the right product for the customer's needs ($M = 4.03$), cosmetics and skincare application ($M = 3.9$), and professional appearance ($M = 3.88$). See Figure 9.

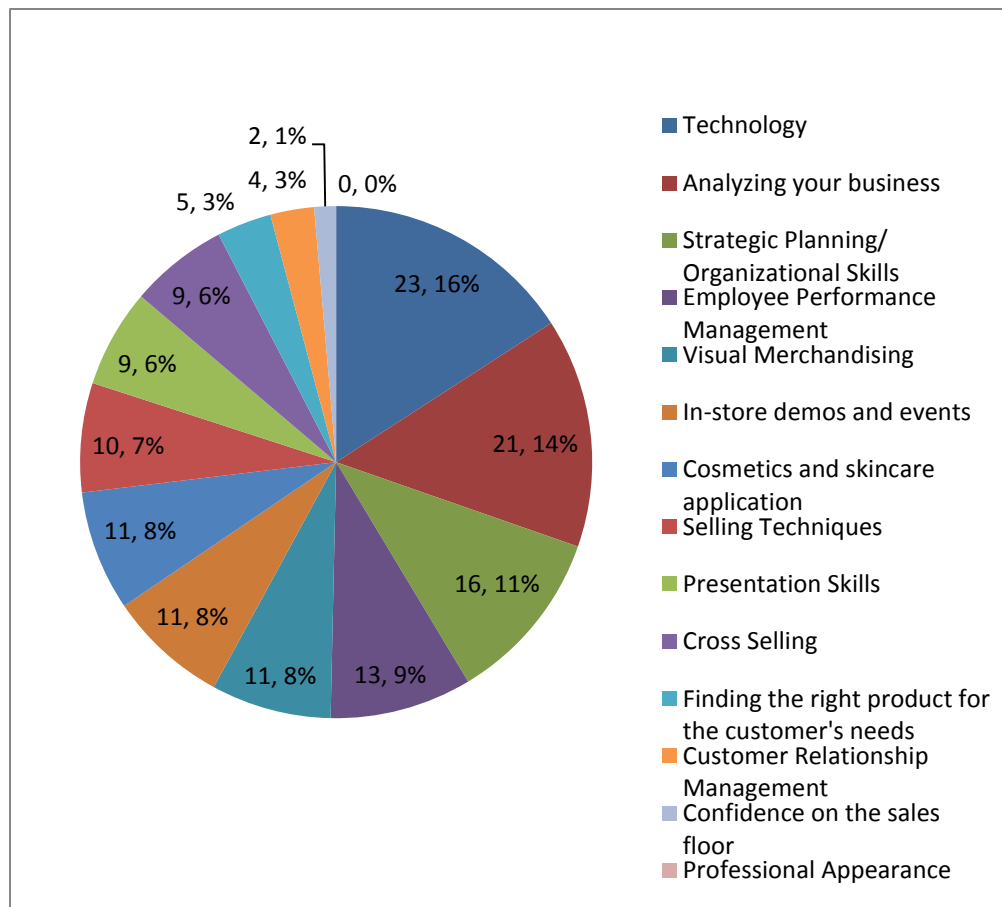


Figure 8. Results of Question 7: What areas listed below would you like to see additional training programs?

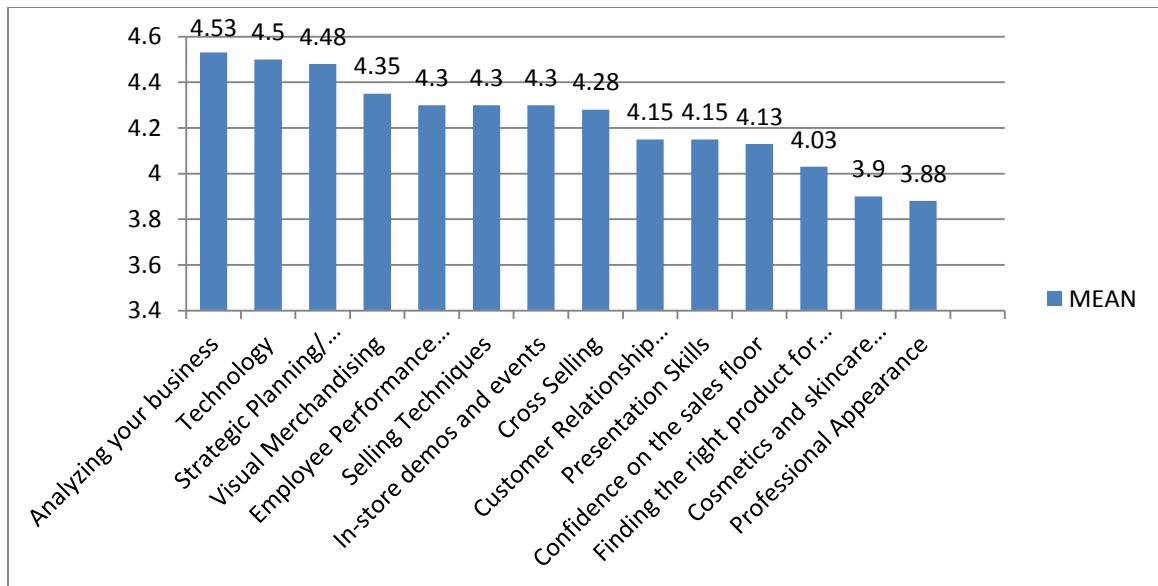


Figure 9. Results of Question 8: How important are the following training topics to you?

Question 9: *How often would you like to receive product knowledge/sales technique training?*

Results for this question show 23 participants (57%) responded that they would like to receive product knowledge training/sales technique training once a quarter, 15 participants (37%) responded that they would like to receive product knowledge/sales technique training monthly, 1 participant would like to receive product knowledge/sales technique training bi-annually, and 1 participant would like to receive product knowledge/ sales technique training annually.

Question 10: *Which describes you best in regards to learning new technology?*

Results for this question show 39 participants (97%) responded that they are open and eager to learn new technologies, and 1 participant responded that they are

open to new technologies but are fearful and/or hesitant to learn a new way of doing things.

Question 11: *How would you describe your technical ability?*

Results for this question show 19 participants (48%) responded that they consider their technical ability as average, 15 participants (37%) responded that their technical ability is above average, 3 participants responded that their technical ability is below average, and 3 participants responded that their technical ability is exceptional. See Figure 10.

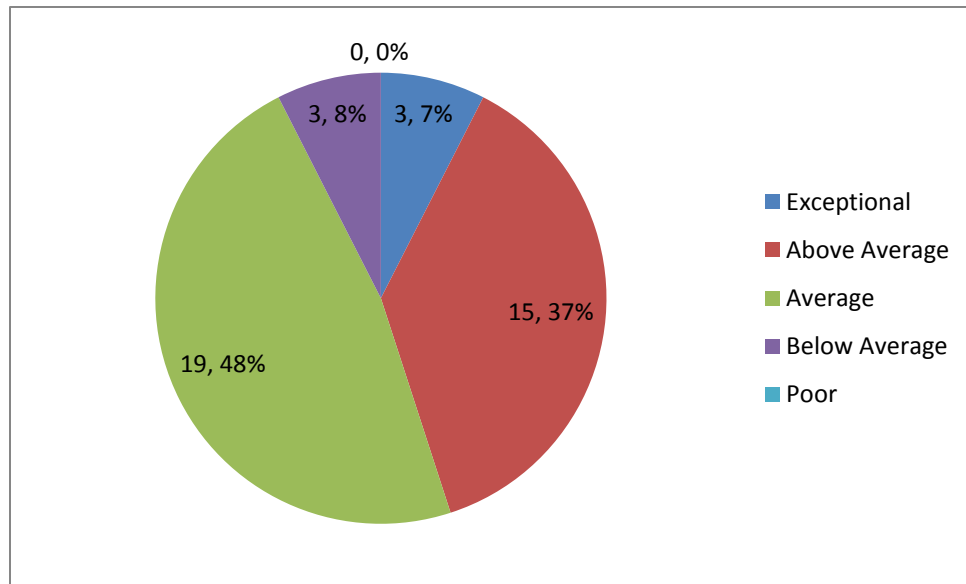


Figure 10. Results of Question 11: How would you describe your technical ability?

Question 12: *What technology would you like to be trained on?*

Results for this question show the top three technologies that the AMs and TMs would like to be trained on are Microsoft Office SharePoint (25%), Microsoft Office Excel (17%), and Microsoft Office PowerPoint (13%). Additional technologies that they would

like to be trained on are Microsoft Surface functionality (11%), WebEx (10%), Adobe Connect (10%), Microsoft Office Word (8%), and Go To Meeting (6%). See Figure 11.

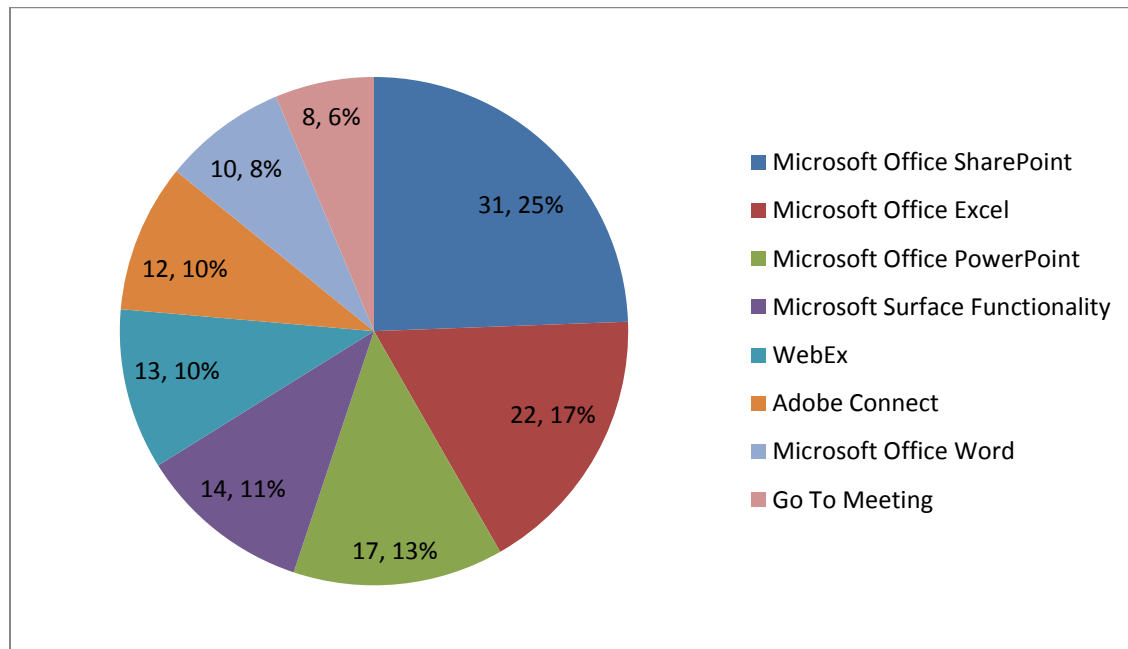


Figure 11. Results of Question 12: What technology would you like to be trained on?

Question 13: *Please select the most desirable day for you to attend virtual training programs*

Results for this question show 22 participants (55%) would prefer to attend virtual trainings on Mondays, 8 participants (20%) would prefer to attend training on Fridays, 6 participants (15%) would prefer to attend trainings on Wednesdays, 2 participants would prefer to attend trainings on Tuesdays, and 2 participants would prefer to attend trainings on Thursdays. See Figure 12.

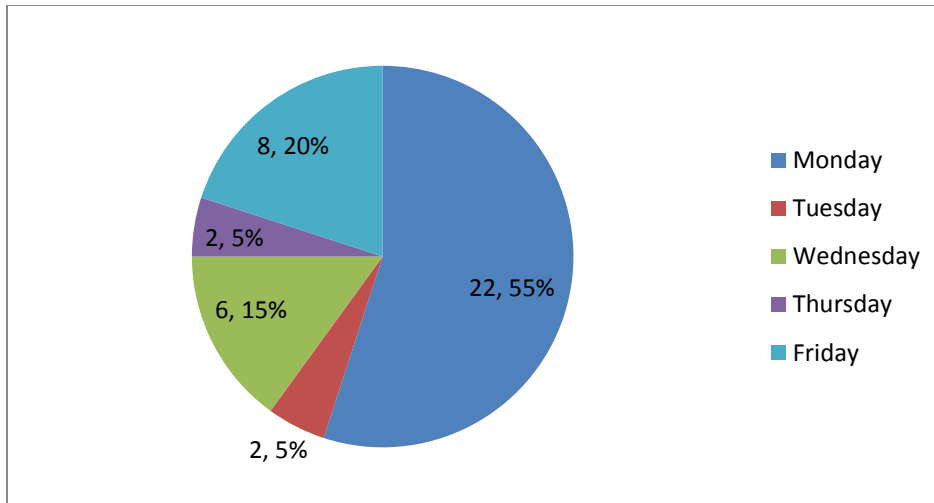


Figure 12. Results of Question 13: Please select the most desirable day for you to attend virtual training programs.

Question 14: Please select the most convenient time for you to attend virtual training programs.

Results for this question show 30 participants (75%) would prefer to attend virtual trainings 10:00am-12:00pm EST, 7 participants (18%) would prefer to attend virtual trainings 2:00pm-4:00pm EST, and 3 participants would prefer to attend virtual trainings 12:00pm-2:00pm. See Figure 13.

Question 15: Please rate the below training methods in terms of how effective each is to you: (1 = Not Very Effective, 2 = Somewhat Effective, 3 = Effective, 4 = Very Effective)

Results for this question show that the majority of the AMs and TMs felt that annual sales meetings are the most effective training method with a mean of 3.73. Following the annual sales meetings the AMs and TMs felt that both in-store and virtual training were equally effective with a mean of 3.32. Lastly, they felt that pre-recorded video training would be less effective with a mean of 3.2. See Figure 14.

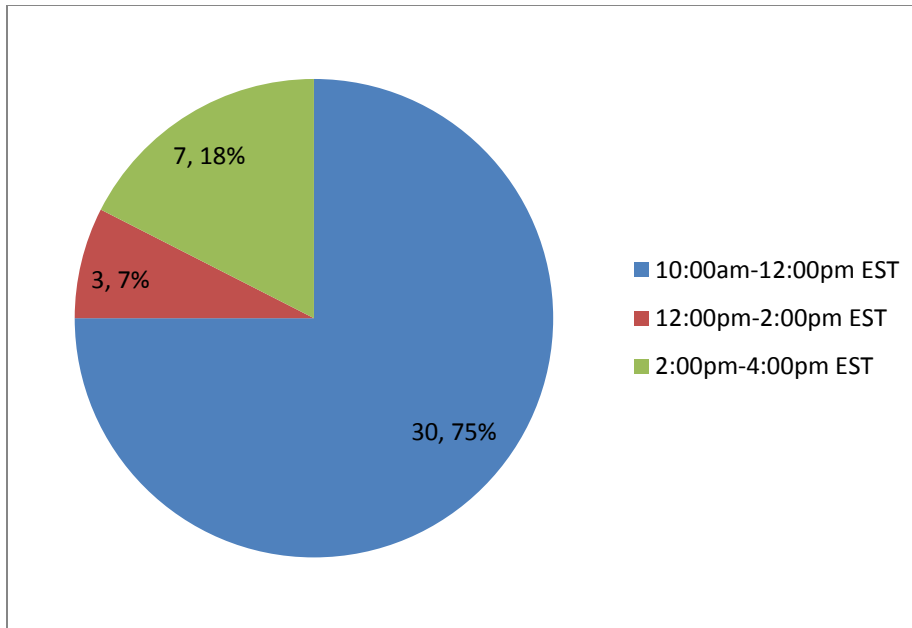


Figure 13. Results of Question 14: Please select the most convenient time for you to attend virtual training programs.

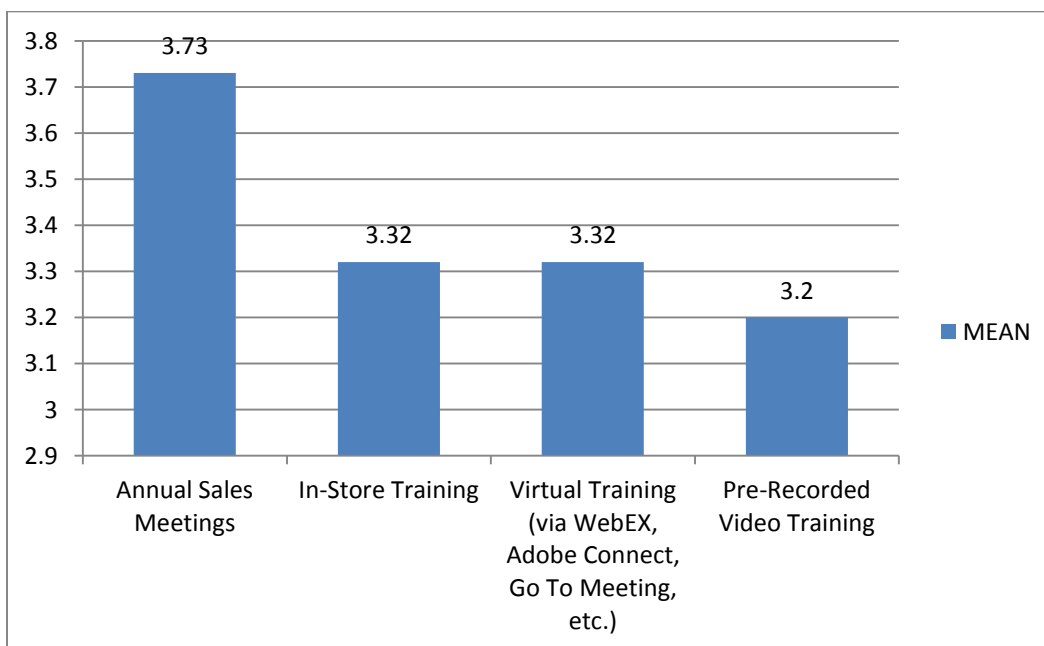


Figure 14. Results of Question 15: Please rate the below training methods in terms of how effective each is to you.

Question 16: *Have you been to conferences or trainings that you would recommend to others?*

Results for this question show 23 participants (56%) have been to conferences or trainings that they would recommend to others, and 18 participants (44%) have not been to conferences or trainings that they would recommend to others.

Question 17: *What are training topics that you feel would be beneficial to new AM/TMs entering the Military Sales Market?*

Twelve of the 40 participants (30%) responded that technology specifically in computer programs would be beneficial training topics for new AMs and TMs entering the Military Resale Market. Six of the 40 participants (15%) responded that business analysis training would be beneficial for new AMs and TMs entering the Military Resale Market.

Question 18: *What types of product knowledge and customer service training do you feel are required to be a successful Territory/Area Manager in the military exchange market?*

When asked what types of product knowledge training is required to be a successful AM or TM, 11 of the 40 participants (27.5%) responded that they need to be trained on the features, benefits, and application of products. When asked what types of customer service training is required to be a successful AM or TM, 10 of the 40 participants (25%) responded that they need to be trained on cross selling and understanding which products to suggest for specific customer needs.

Question 19: *Please provide any suggestions on how S & K Sales can better support individual and organizational success.*

Twelve of the 40 participants (30%) responded that they would like to see more training support from S & K Sales. Eight of the 40 participants (20%) responded that they would like to see better communication from the S & K corporate office to the field team.

SUMMARY

Of the 40 surveys distributed there was 100% participation. Data were presented that provided information to determine recommendations of professional development that could fulfill the training needs of the Area and Territory managers. The research confirmed that product knowledge and customer service training is important and needed in the Military Exchange Market.

The next chapter provides a summary of this research. Conclusions will be drawn from the information presented in this chapter. The last section includes recommendations made by the researcher for professional development to fulfill the training needs of the Area and Territory managers.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter overviews what was presented in this study. It includes a description of the research problem and population, information acquired through the review of literature, the methods used to collect the data, and the findings. This chapter addresses conclusions that can be drawn from the information obtained during the research. Finally, the researcher makes recommendations concerning the training needs of a worldwide military exchange salesforce.

SUMMARY

The problem of this study was to determine the training needs of a worldwide military exchange salesforce to enhance their ability to train store personnel on product knowledge and customer service at military exchange stores. With the increased competition from other military exchange resale companies, which were providing similar levels of in store military exchange support, S & K Sales Co. needed to focus their efforts on identifying how they could train and develop their field team to ensure they remained on top. Research suggested that both product knowledge and customer service training are very important to the Area and Territory Managers.

An electronic survey was constructed containing open and closed form questions. The purpose of the survey was to determine the training needs of a worldwide military exchange salesforce to enhance their ability to train store personnel on product knowledge and customer service at military exchange stores. The survey also

identified the salesforce training needs, positive effects that training has had on the salesforce, and beneficial training methods and topics. The questions correspond to the research objectives and findings of other studies. The survey was sent to all 40 Area and Territory Managers via Survey Planet. There was a 100% response rate. The data were analyzed by number, percentage, mean, and standard deviation.

CONCLUSIONS

This section was organized according to the research goals.

RQ₁: Identify the types of product knowledge and customer service training required to be a successful territory manager in the military exchange market.

- Product Knowledge Training: Eleven of the 40 participants (27.5%) responded that in order to be a successful AM or TM in the Military Exchange Market, they need to be trained on the features, benefits, and application of products.
- Customer Service Training: Ten of the 40 participants (25%) responded that in order to be a successful AM or TM in the Military Exchange Market, they need to be trained on cross selling and understanding which products to suggest for specific customer needs.

RQ₂: Identify the types of product knowledge and customer service training that the military exchange salesforce should receive from their military broker.

- Product Knowledge Training:
 - Thirty-seven of the 40 participants (92.5%) responded that product knowledge training was very important to them.

- As stated in response to RQ₁, understanding the features, benefits and application of products is key to being well versed on product knowledge. Eleven of the 40 participants (27.5%) responded that they needed this training in order to be successful in their role.
 - Hands-on and visual practice with the product was also identified as an important part of product knowledge training. Seven of the 40 participants (17.5%) responded that hands-on and visual training on product knowledge is important.
- Customer Service Training:
 - Thirty-one of the 40 participants (77.5%) responded that customer service training was very important to them.
 - As stated in response to RQ₁, AMs and TMs need to be trained on cross selling and understanding which products to suggest for specific customer needs. Ten of the 40 participants (25%) responded that in order to be a successful in their role, they need to be trained on cross selling and understanding which products to suggest for specific customer needs.
 - Understanding the history of the product, if the product is healthy, the expiration policies, return policies, how to relate with customers, and how to drive sales and client background information are also very important training topics that are needed.

- Advanced customer service training in cosmetics, haircare, and skincare. Seven of the 40 participants (17.5%) suggested that additional customer service training was needed specifically focused on the cosmetics, haircare, and skincare categories.
- Understanding the military customer versus the civilian customer. Four of the 40 participants (10%) stated that it is important to be trained on the difference between both the military and civilian customer and customer service and sales techniques targeting the military consumer.

RQ₃: Determine the specific topics of training that should be offered to territory managers to better prepare them to excel in the military sales market.

- The Area and Territory Managers would like to see product knowledge training monthly and/or quarterly. Twenty-three of the 40 participants (57%) responded that they would like to receive product knowledge training/sales technique training once a quarter. Fifteen of the 40 participants (37%) responded that they would like to receive product knowledge/sales technique training monthly.
- With a mean of 4.53, the AMs and TMs identified that being able to analyze their business was the most important training area to best prepare them in the military sales market.

- Training programs on technology ($M = 4.5$) and strategic planning and organizational skills ($M = 4.48$) were identified as the next most important training areas.
- Visual merchandising training ($M = 4.35$), employee performance management training ($M = 4.3$), in-store demos and events training ($M = 4.3$), and sales technique training ($M = 4.3$) were also identified as important training areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these research findings, it is confirmed that training is valued and needs to be provided within a worldwide military exchange salesforce to enhance their ability to train store personnel on product knowledge and customer service at military exchange stores. It is understood that not all Area and Territory Managers will have the same training needs, however this research has established key training areas that a Military Broker should offer to enhance their salesforce.

Basic training should be offered in the following categories: information technology, analyzing your business, strategic planning and organizational skills, employee performance management, visual merchandising, and in-store demos and events. Because AMs and TMs are located all around the world and are in various time zones, this basic training should be available on an asynchronous virtual platform such as Versal, so existing or new AMs and TMs can reference it at their convenience. Versal is an open publishing platform for anyone to create interactive online courses. Versal's distinctive interface makes it simple to structure and organize lessons, build a complete

curriculum, and teach new concepts in a new and effective way. The platform offers interactive drag-and-drop customizable gadgets to create engaging new content, create evaluations, and import existing materials including document files, pictures, and audio. It also allows you to share your course with anyone; you can send a direct link or post to social media, embed it in a website/blog, or add it to the company's Microsoft SharePoint Site. Modules can be created for each training topic followed by knowledge checks at the end of each module consisting of three to five multiple choice questions that the AM or TM must complete with 100% accuracy in order to move to the next module. Once completing all training modules, the AM or TM will then be required to take a final test which will consist of knowledge learned throughout all modules. Upon successful completion of the training program, the AMs and TMs would be provided a completion certificate. By providing a required basic training program, and incorporating knowledge checks and a final test, it will ensure that all of the AMs and TMs have the skills they need to be successful in their role as an AM or TM.

Although the AMs and TMs did feel that an annual sales meeting was the most effective training method, they felt that virtual and in-store training methods were almost just as effective. With the inflated expense of hosting annual sales meetings, and the regular training needed in the product knowledge and customer service, it is recommended that product knowledge and customer service training be provided quarterly in a synchronous virtual setting using training tools such as WebEx, Go To Meeting, or Adobe Connect, where the AMs and TMs are able to ask questions and share suggestions throughout the training. Following the quarterly product knowledge

and customer service virtual trainings, AMs can then provide their TMs with corresponding hands-on in-store training to reinforce the learning process. It is also recommended that the AMs meet monthly on one of the suggested virtual platforms to discuss what is working and not working in their geographic areas. This will allow the AMs to collaborate and learn from one another so they can then share success stories with their TMs which will ultimately make them more successful at store level. Future research is recommended in examining the various virtual training platforms to determine which platform would be most effective for training a Military Exchange Salesforce.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY

Purpose: The purpose of this survey was to determine the training needs of a worldwide military exchange salesforce to enhance their ability to train store personnel on product knowledge and customer service at military exchange stores.

Directions: As a military salesforce expert, I would ask that you respond to each of the following questions by selecting the answer which most clearly represents your assessment. For the short answer questions towards the end of the survey, please provide as much insight and detail as possible.

1. What is your highest level of education you have completed?

- ☐ GED
- ☐ High school Graduate
- ☐ Associates Degree
- ☐ Bachelor's Degree
- ☐ Master's Degree
- ☐ Ph.D.

2. How long have you worked in a field sales role in the Military Exchange Market?

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Less than one year | <input type="radio"/> 11-15 Years |
| <input type="radio"/> 1-2 Years | <input type="radio"/> 16-20 Years |
| <input type="radio"/> 3-4 Years | <input type="radio"/> 21-25 Years |
| <input type="radio"/> 5-10 Years | <input type="radio"/> More than 25 |

3. Overall, how do you rate the current training provided by S & K Sales Co.?

- ☐ Poor
- ☐ Below Average
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Above Average
- ☐ Exceptional

4. Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of the training provided by S & K Sales Co.?

- ☐ Not Very Effective
- ☐ Somewhat Effective
- ☐ Effective
- ☐ Very Effective

5. How important is customer service training to you?

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Somewhat Important
- ☐ Not Important

6. How important is product knowledge training to you?

- ☐ Very Important
- ☐ Somewhat Important
- ☐ Not Important

**7. What areas listed below would you like to see additional training programs?
(Select your top three)**

- ☐ Customer Relationship Management
- ☐ Finding the right product for the customer's needs
- ☐ Confidence on the sales floor

- ☐ Professional Appearance
- ☐ Visual Merchandising
- ☐ Employee Performance Management
- ☐ Strategic Planning/ Organizational Skills
- ☐ Presentation Skills
- ☐ Analyzing your business
- ☐ Selling techniques
- ☐ Technology
- ☐ Cross Selling
- ☐ In-store demos and events
- ☐ Cosmetics and skincare application

8. How important are the following training topics to you? (1 = Not Important, 2 = Not Now, 3 = Not Sure, 4 = Somewhat Important, 5 = Very Important)

	1	2	3	4	5
Customer Relationship Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input checked="" type="radio"/>
Finding the right product for the customer's needs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Confidence on the sales floor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professional Appearance	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visual Merchandising	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employee Performance Management	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strategic Planning/ Organizational Skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Presentation Skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	1	2	3	4	5
Analyzing your business	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Selling Techniques	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Technology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cross Selling	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In-store demos and events	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cosmetics and skincare application	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

9. How often would you like to receive product knowledge/sales technique training?

- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Quarterly
- ☐ Bi-Annually
- ☐ Annually

10. Which describes you best in regards to learning new technology?

- ☐ I am open and eager to learn new technologies.
- ☐ I am open to new technologies but am fearful and/or hesitant to learn a new way of doing things.
- ☐ I am not open to new technologies.

11. How would you describe your technical ability?

- ☐ Exceptional
- ☐ Above Average
- ☐ Average
- ☐ Below Average

☐ Poor

12. What technology would you like to be trained on? (check all that apply)

- ☐ Microsoft Office Word
- ☐ Microsoft Office Excel
- ☐ Microsoft Office PowerPoint
- ☐ Spreadsheets
- ☐ Microsoft SharePoint
- ☐ Microsoft Office
- ☐ WebEx
- ☐ Adobe Connect
- ☐ Go To Meeting
- ☐ Microsoft Surface Functionality

13. Please select the most desirable day for you to attend virtual training programs:

- ☐ Monday
- ☐ Tuesday
- ☐ Wednesday
- ☐ Thursday
- ☐ Friday

14. Please select the most convenient time for you to attend virtual training programs:

- ☐ 10:00am – 12:00pm EST
- ☐ 2:00pm - 4:00pm EST

15. Please rate the below training methods in terms of how effective each is to you:

market?

19. Please provide any suggestions on how S & K Sales can better support individual and organizational success.

Thank you for your participation in this Survey. Your candid input and time are appreciated.

APPENDIX B - NOTIFICATION LETTER

To: All S&K Sales Co. Territory and Area Managers

From: Chelsea Camarda, National Accounts Manager

Re: Problem Study for Training Needs of a Worldwide Military Exchange Salesforce

Date: April 22nd, 2015

In order to stay abreast with the ever-changing competitive environment, it is important for S & K Sales to separate themselves from the competition by offering the best possible training in the industry. By providing structured training programs to the salesforce, it could benefit the entire salesforce, thereby positively affecting the overall company performance. Because the salesforce includes a diverse group of AMs and TMs with different levels of abilities and qualifications, research is necessary to determine the specific training needed that would provide the most benefit to the overall sales team.

I am conducting a study to determine the training needs of a worldwide military exchange salesforce. Your participation in the study will allow me to identify the training needs to better assist you with training store personnel on product knowledge and customer service at military exchange stores.

Your participation is voluntary and will be treated confidential. Risks to you will be minimal since data will be kept protected and findings will be reported anonymously. There will be no direct benefit to you for participating in this study. Hopefully the findings will benefit all S & K employees. You will receive a copy of the summary of the study and the conclusions drawn from the findings. This study will enable me to project a guideline of certain training necessary to fulfill your training needs.

If you have any questions or reason to decline, please discuss the matter with me as soon as possible.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Regards,

Chelsea Camarda

S&K Sales Co.
National Account Manager